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Depot Town Rag

Volume 15, Number 3 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

100% FREE Rag content

March 1992

- **More signs of life**
- Kirk Profit's lesson
- ***Jazz* is back in town!**
- *New light on edifice*
- **Bum signals**

and other strictly local stuff. . . .

Second-oldest profession finds its tools in the district:

Teachers Shop & Learning Center a unique addition to commercial mix

Teachers, parents and kids, peruse the racks at The Teachers Shop on a Saturday morning.

"Let's play school!" is a popular theme in this town. While we watch other businesses rise and wane, education has long been the biggest industry in Ypsilanti. Public and private schools, colleges and universities have been an integral part of this community since the Ypsilanti Seminary days of the early 19th Century.

Just as soon as they started turning out schoolmarms at the Michigan Normal School, they started to design bulletin boards, write on the chalkboard, and pass out workbooks. Compasses, rulers, protractors, shiny gold stars, and rubber stamp Happy Faces were typical ameneties used by these skilled graduates as they directed the nation's classrooms. Most of us were aware of those educator artifacts and habits because we were the ricipients of their ministrations, but few of us ever wondered where the the tools of that ancient trade came from.

Today's teachers may use more computers than slates, but the learning process remains the same and the hardware for such technology is showcased in a unique shop just at the edge of today's Eastern Michigan University. The Teachers Shop was created by Don Buckeye in 1976and situated right at the edge of what was once the Normal School (now Eastern Michigan University). The specialty shop was purchased by Margaret Harner in 1983. In 1987 Margaret and husband, Ivan, bought the Heritage Square Building next to the Cross Street Bridge and moved the business to Depot Town. Today that space offers an unusual location overlooking the scenic riverside parks on the west, the bustling Freighthouse and abundant parking to the north, and dynamic Depot Town at its east entry. Off-street parking is also found right in front of the shop.

Margaret is an Ypsi kid; she went to Adams/Prospect School, Ypsilanti High School, then to MSU and EMU where she was certified as a teacher. She taught in the Lincoln Schools kindergarten and in the Head Start pre-school program. Ivan is president of Brighton Hospital.

A haven for private or public ed. mavens and home schools, alike, her unique Teachers Shop finds a loyal cadre of customers who seek neither a book store nor an office supply emporium, but a commercial enterprise tailored especially for their classroom and educational needs.

"Official and approved," new park signs appear

The City pf Ypsilanti erected spiffy new signs at the entries to Frog Island Park and across the street/river at Riverside Park, as well. No sooner did Parks and Rec. Director, Amy McMillan, proudly announce their long-awaited arrival than active DepotTowners were suggesting painting them some other color - perhaps to complement the coming Crossing Guard Tower colors and its four 'shadow signs' in the district.

"Don't you dare!" intoned Director Amy, and with good reason. It took nearly four years to get the design, financing, approval, colors and installation through all the usual formal folderol necessary for such an official act.

Now, after countless years of having to guess which park was which, the crusing public can differentiate between these two portions of Ypsilanti's unique version of New York's Central Park. The Official Blue and White designators clearly name the two sides of the river which are joined by the 'tridge' above the Huron River and below the Cross Street Bridge. Such creative access to publicly owned waterways is seldom equalled.

Emblazoned, also, upon these heralds is the new Parks & Rec logo, not the 1989-adopted City Logo, but yet another sign of life in historic Ypsilanti

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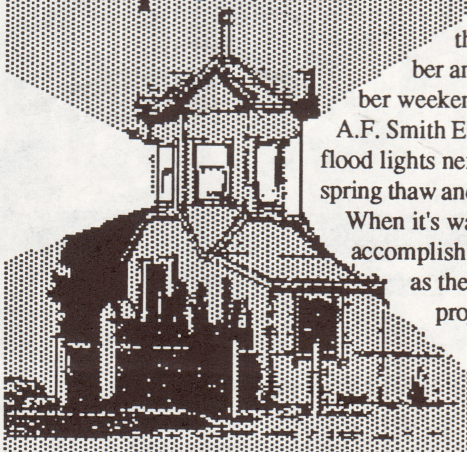
482-1780

GOOD FOOD
GOOD DRINKS
GOOD TIMES
SIDETRACK
56 E. CROSS

A new light on our edifice complex:



New kids on this block will probably call it a 'light house, since last month's illumination of the newly replicated Crossing Guard Tower at the corner of Cross, River and the railroad tracks. Construction began in November and continued through some of the coldest December weekends anyone can remember.

A.F. Smith Electric installed the interior light and four exterior flood lights next. Now the project will sit *on hold*, awaiting the spring thaw and the final application of trim work to the exterior.

When it's warm enough to paint, many volunteers will try to accomplish both coats of finish in the same three-tone green as the four new shadow signs, hoping to complete the project in one warm weekend.

After that, it's the job of Huron Advertising to finish up with their elegant lettering to repeat the theme established on the four smaller signs around the neighborhood.

Ypsi's newest exclamation point gets more exclamatory every month as the progress of volunteerism goes into 1992!

Quality of life paralleled in kids' school lesson

- Kirk A. Profit, State Representative, 22nd District

My children and I were discussing the book *Lord of the Flies* which recently was assigned to one of them in school. We were discussing the symbolism of the different characters, events and objects in the book and some very contemporary relevance occurred to me.

You may recall the story in which some children are placed on an island and how their quality of life, in what began as a small *civilized* society, deteriorates into uncivilized savagery. Although Ralph establishes himself early as the leader of the group, he is soon challenged by Jack who rapidly gains the favor of the group, initially through confrontation with Ralph, then through promises of certain benefits (without indicating how they are to be achieved or what the members will have to give up in order to achieve them), then by dividing the group (making sure that the division that is drawn leaves him in the favor of the majority even though rights and opportunities for the minority led by Ralph are drastically diminished). Along the way, Jack is shrewd in playing on the fears of the young boys by identifying and exploiting an unknown and non-existent beast as the enemy against whom the boys need to rally around Jack for their defense.

Ultimately, through unfounded fears, threats and intimidation, members of the minority are initially deprived of the opportunities for any quality of life and elementary opportunities for cultural amenities, such as Piggy's glasses, are destroyed. Later, Piggy, a member of the minority, is actually killed. In the end, civilization eventually returns to the boys when the sorry circumstances to which they have taken themselves are put into perspective by the return of the reality of the real world.

I couldn't help but find relevance in this story with Michigan in 1991. The politics that are practiced are of a style that calls for dividing the Michigan team, making sure that the politician makes the division so that he/she is on the majority side. Leadership is acquired by promises that cannot be kept or by delivery of them through means similar to the uncivilized savagery that occurs in the book.

There are many beasts used by politicians, such as the threat of Communism, or, more recently, the Willie Horton-type message, or, closer to home, the anti-Detroit message.

Leaders like Jack in the book are favored at the expense of a quality of life that we have come to enjoy in Michigan; and leaders like Ralph scramble daily in hopes that soon the majority's fear of the beast will be relieved, and that a reality check is made so that we can return to a path of improved quality of life for *all* members of the Michigan team.

As we move through 1992, let's remember that we are all Americans and in Michigan we are all members of the Michigan family. The quality of life that is important is the one that is good for us all.

"This renaissance Detroit can't enter; of local history we're the center!"

Presenting: Sugar Blue, Big Dave & The Ultrasonics

WINTER BLUES & Jazz! Series

in the Freighthouse

Saturday, March 21, 1992
Saturday, April 25, 1992

The 1992 Winter Blues & Jazz Series begins March 21 and features a unique program featuring new and old, traditional and modern harmonica/mouth harp.

Big Dave and The Ultrasonics is an aggressive, new, funky house-rockin' blues act that has both music critics and audiences excited. Centered around the soulful, smokey vocals of bandleader "Big Dave" Steele, the group features an amazing line-up of soloists and a rock-solid rhythm section. Successes have been many for a group so young . . . they opened for Mitch Ryder and Koko Taylor, and headlined in concerts before cheering thousands at the Detroit Blues Festival and Ann Arbor's Summerfest. Audiences are moved by the band's talent, enthusiasm and sense of fun. Critics have noted their strong song rirting skills which draw from the Chicago, New Orleans and Texas Blues traditions as well as from Rock, Jazz and Funk elements. From any perspective, Big Dave and the Ultrasonics is becoming a hard act to follow.

Sugar Blue

And that's just what is intended for March 21 in Depot Town: Following this enthusiastic act *is* hard to follow, and afficianados of the mouth harp in rock, jazz, and blues can find no better classic performance than Sugar Blue's.

Sugar Blue has been called the Jimi Henrix or Charlie Parker of the harmonica, setting out to change the definition of his instrument. He played for six years in Paris — the Rolling Stones heard him at a subway stop, and he sat in on a few of their records — before moving here to study with the late Big Walter Horton and other blues-harp masters.

With an extraordinary sense of dynamics and tone, Sugar Blue can create a musical backdrop to enhance any style of music and is also an exciting and vibrant lead player. The versatility shown in Blue's style has earned him the distinction of being the most in-demand session harmonica player in the buisness.

When you watch Sugar Blue perform, see if you can tear your eyes away for a minute to look at the rest of the audience.

Doubtless you'll see a collection of dropped jaws and shaking heads, people who just can not believe the sounds this blues harmonica virtuoso is wringing out of his instruments. He bends, shakes, spills flurries of notes with simultaneous precision and abandon, his trademark beret dangerously close to flying off in the sheer heat of things. Blue not only combines dazzling techniques with smoldering expressiveness, he gives off enough energy to light up several spare city blocks. Who knows? Ypsilanti's vibes could reach beyond Ann Arbor on this auspicious evening of mouth-harping.

The man sings too — he's got a rich, sometimes plaintive, distinctive voice, which by itself would be something out of the ordinary. But, oh brother, there's that harmonica again!

Blue has played them all, performing with such classic artists as the late Muddy Waters, B.B. King, Stan Getz, Art Blakey, Lionel Hampton and Frank Zappa. He appeared on screen and performed on the musical score of Alan parker's acclaimed 1987 film *Angel Heart*, starring Robert DeNiro. As a special guest, he sat in with Fats Domino, Ray Charles and Jerry Lee Lewis for the Cinemax cable special "Fats Domino and Friends."

All this . . . and a follow-up dance concert on April 25: **A Chicago Blues Review** to be announced in next month's *Depot TownRag*.

Single concert admission to the March 21 Winter Blues and Jazz Series in the Freighthouse is by ticket through TicketMaster, WEMU, and many Depot Town businesses at $12.50 advance sales or $13.50 at the door, if available. Tickets for the April 25 concert will be similarly available.

Beer, wine, and other refreshments will be offered in the Freighthouse coffeeshop.

The usual complement of helpful volunteers is invited to call 483-4256 to aid in setting up, taking tickets, tending bar, helping folks feel secure and cleaning up after the event.

Freeman Bunting Insurance Agency
107 West Michigan Avenue
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197
Telephone: 482-4732 • Betty Campbell
• Jim Campbell • Nancy Petosky
• Mary Lou Linke • Ken Burcaw
security through insurance since 1921

Amazing Grains
Saturday, March 14
11 am - 3 pm
Healthy Recipes & Samples
Using Whole Grains
Rice, Millet, Oats, Quinoa, Buckwheat, Bulgur, Kamut, Spelt!
YPSIL FOOD COOP
Sun. 12-5, M,T,Th, F 10-7 Wed. 10-9 Sat. 9-7
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ACTION RENTAL
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SALOON
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Since 1873

482-0735
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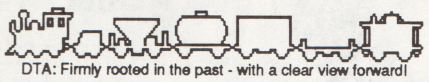
LUMBER COMPANY
2800 East Michigan Ave.
THERE IS A MATERIAL DIFFERENCE

Mr. Goo's Cars Wash
317 E. MICHIGAN AVE.

Depot Town Association, Inc., 20 February 1992


DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

Minutes for January - Jazz & Blues moved to March & April, not February & March.

Treasury - Electric paid Sept-Jan $80.64. Balance = $1981.08. Parade money not received from Ypsilanti Press.

Ypsi Area Street Rods will kick off their May 2 show in Depot Town from 7-9pm. Parking lot will be closed to traffic at 3pm; rods only after 3. Pre-registration in coffee shop. City will do advance press and get sound permit. DJ may go on the north side. VP Dave Blackmer will work with Amy McMillan to get more such events into the district. Encourage the merchants to stay open that night.

EMU Greek Week in Depot Town? Bill French says EMU wants it to stay on campus.

Caboose: Dave Fallen will give bid on repair after May 2. Needs another bid for total job broken down into phases.

Blues & Jazz Saturday, March 21: Insurance is $995. Budget is $360 over approved amount per concert (see page 3 for hype).

Square and Contra Dancers would like to have events in Freighthouse and would like DTA to sponsor in July. Expect 75-100 people. DTA voted support.

District projects proposed:

Caboose repair	$3000
Drinking fountain	$1750
Landscaping (1st phase)	$7500
Business Manager	$6000
Flower boxes	$ 500
Christmas decoration	$6000
Kiosk	$2500
Christmas season banners	$1000
TOTAL	**$29,250**

DDA needs to take this on as a budget project for themselves using our DDA money plus our needs from Council.

Business Manager possibility: Job descriptions need to be written before going to Council. Physical improvements and media coverage discussed. Committee formed with Judi Monaghan and Margaret Harner to set job needs.

1992 Heritage Festival:

- No parking on Frog Island on contract.
- Heritage Jazz set will be inspected for lights and circuits before festival. Let operations know how much time is necessary for them to inspect and still have enough time to effect changes if necessary. Entire plan needs to be submitted to Amy McMillan showing lights, sound & concession needs. Drop dead date is July.
- Steve Gross reported installation of art from Teachers Shop to Depot Exchange. Give 10 X 10 spot to build sculpture fitting rules. Sunday judging for $1000-$1500 prize to be funded by Heritage Festival. Steve, Carolyn and John Gawlas will follow up.
- Frog Island's Children's Village closes at 8:00 pm.

Cow Chips coming: Steve Gross wants to do the Cow Flop Raffle in May. Gross, Richard Reid and Bill French will clear a date for Frog Island, get Michigan Lottery permit.

President's Message

I'm pleased to announce that we are going on a trip. Remember the ones where mom and dad used to draw that imaginary line in the back seat to prevent your loving brother or sister from touching you? Be thankful this is not one of those trips.

Instead, we are going down the road of change and improvement. Your Association last month held a 'Planning Retreat" that was facilitated by Jeff Stabnau, the chairman of the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce. This meeting lasted four hours and was well represented by our membership. The style and manner in which Jeff ran the meeting encouraged input from everyone and ultimately a consensus was reached where we wanted Depot Town to go and how we were going to get there.

We drew a road map — with the simple understanding that our effort to improve Depot Town and its business climate was needed and necessary — not only for Depot Town, but neighboring business districts as well. If Depot Town becomes a destination spot for shoppers and visitors, the entire City of Ypsilanti will benefit.

When this meeting was adjourned, we left with the belief that these plans were not going to gather dust. We intend to put our plans into action.

- Bill French, your Prez

Something's happening at 27 East Cross!
T·R·E·A·S·U·R·E·S
is joining
DESIGNS ON YOU
Quality resale • Clothing & Goods for men, women and children
Now accepting consignments
Call 482-2010 or stop in at 27 East Cross
Great infant & little boy things now available

Ypsilanti Recycling Project
• Take the load off landfills
• Reduce municipal spending
• Conserve our natural resources
• Preserve our environment
651 Rice Street
Friday: noon - dusk, **Saturday:** 9 am - 3 pm

March 1992

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 19th
The Old Caboose

Depot Town Antique Engine Club 26th
7:30 pm, Thursday
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

This month's Shoppers' Survey winners:
Jean Cundiff • Megan Trudeau
Each won dinner for two at either **Aubree's Saloon** or **The Sidetrack.**

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG
A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.
-Tom Dodd, editor
The Depot Town Association, Inc.
A. William French, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Rental properties in Depot Town

Retail space available at 11 East Cross. Offstreet parking. 600-1350 sq. ft. Inqurie at Teachers Shop, 15 East Cross or call 483-3464.

Contact DepotTown Clearing House at 482-6371 for a great selection of local rental opportunities.

You can rent
The Old Caboose
for your party
($25 + deposit)
Call 483-4256.

• Custom Draperies
• Vertical Blinds
• 1" Blinds
• Shutters
• Shades
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Ann Arbor 663-7011 • Ypsilanti 482-6338
10 E. Cross St. Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Local logos speak for their businesses. Can you name them?

The use of logotypes in advertising is an ancient form of communication. Early examples often showed a picture without any words. A giant tooth hung outside the dentist's office, a fake wooden clock in front of the clock and watch repair shop. The optometrist hung giant spectacles over the entry and the pawn broker became most abstract with the cluster of three gold balls hanging above the doorway. Long before neon beer ads blinked from tavern windows, a cocktail-glass-shaped window often was cut into the solid doorway showing the way to a stiff drink.

Simplified sign pictures certainly appealed to a basically illiterate consumer, but they also made it easier for those who *could* read, too. Today's international traffic signals help drivers as they travel between countries -- without having the background of each country's language and custom.

Depot Town businesses have long seen the benefit of hyping their excellent and well-known products and services with logotype designs and the tradition spurs newer entrepreneurs to benefit from an ancient advertising axiom: Show 'em what you've got and they'll want it.

1. Depot Exchange Antiques was the first antique dealer in the block and they still use the old dresser design to show off their speciality.

2. Ike's Depot Barbershop is one of four hair cutting emporia on the block and the original pole is still out for repairs.

3. Riverside Lawn & Garden Supply's little leaf is a subtle reminder of the place which has everything we need for our friends, the trees.

4. River Artworks' abstract design ties together the river and the art to prove their motto: "We do art to art."

5. Ypsilanti Recycling Project's three inter-relating arrows probably represent the newest and most popular logo design in recent American history.

6. Olde Towne Coin & Gold have always used an American eagle to signify their coin collector connections.

7. Red Rooster Pizza's namesake doesn't really drink beer; just pizza and ice cream.

8. Hon's Flowers & Fancies aptly shows a high style topiary tree to compliment their excellent floral designs.

9. Depot Doo's glamor girl looks a lot like owner Linda Lister before she cut her own hair.

10. Crazy Barb's Paperback Book Exchange shows she's not so crazy, after all. Barbara Coleman had this caricature drawn by a street artist during the 1989 Heritage Fest and has been using it ever since.

11. Aubree's Saloon has used this 1870's bartender for so long that co-owner Bill French is starting to look like it, himself.

12. Ypsilanti Food Co-op's "wheat dancing in the sun" stylizes their healthy attitude toward good, fresh food.

13. Ad Art may be a new company name to some, but Carolyn McKeever's designs have graced the block's promotions for sixteen years through festivals, concerts and posters.

14. Goofy's Car Wash makes a big splash with this goofy little - but clean - car.

15. City Body's 1948 Hudson signs look like they could have driven right out of Miller Motors' showroom at the other end of the block. [Other commercial districts might have seen that as 'competition' but in Depot Town it's called 'cooperation!']

16. Ted's Auto Electric boasts another antique, but Ted Mull can work on any model at his venerable shop.

17. The Depot Town Association's old caboose has become an emblem for the whole block's attitude: "Firmly rooted in the past -- with a clear view forward."

More primitive signs once were found in this railroad district

Not many years ago the promoters of Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town offered up a low-key mid-summer celebration called 'Boomer Days,' in which they reveled in the bygone customs of the tramps, bums and hoboes who frequented such districts in the Depression Days of the Twenties and Thirties.

Even in the early Eighties some local wags wondered if those 'bad old days' might be coming back. Just in case the Nineties might see their return, the following symbols might become a part of the nation's non-verbal communication style again.

Whether the hobo of history was a national figure such as Ernest Hemingway or a local neighbor like Depot Town's Harold 'Jonesy' Jones -- who still lives around the corner on Photo Street -- they all found guidance and direction from the simple messages scratched onto signposts, fences, alongside doorways and on sidewalks.

Knowing the information was fleeting, most of the signals were written in chalk, soon to be washed away by the elements. Longer lasting messages may have been carved or scratched into the surface.

Regular folks hardly noticed them, since they would be added to the frame of an existing sign or on the bottom edge of a mailbox or garden gate.

The following advice was tipped recently by Toledo's 'Steam Train Maury,' who has often been crowned 'King of the Hoboes' in national fetes to recognize their heritage:

Good place for a handout -

- You can sleep in this farmer's barn. There *isn't* one on the YRP barn!

- Bad bull, stay out of the yards. Sometimes this referred to railroad cops.

- Good jungle. Make yourself at home. Ypsi's jungle is still semi-active.

Dishonest man. Don't ask for work-

Bad water -

- Folks will help you if you're sick.

Watch out. A policeman lives here -

- Shows direction of travel for hobo buddies to follow.

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483-4555

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WE DO ART... ...TO ART
48 East Cross Street
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A Depot Town SAMPLER

They gave us a sign

"Give us a sign!" proclaimed an early headline in this paper many years ago. Anyone who knew about Ypsilanti's recent history knew that it was around the corner from everywhere else. And Depot Town was around the corner from all that. Just try to drive straight to either this City or this District and you'll see why it was so necessary to help folks find their way back to their roots from the Interstate highways.

After only twelve years of complaining to officals, the signs began to appear. One showed the way to the rail passenger station but it was too late. Others made it clear that there was a state university in *this town*, too. Still more pointed out the twice-weekly, year-'round Farmers' Market and more signs showed that, once you'd found Ypsi, there was a choice of Downtown, Campus or Depot Town.

Hard as it may be to believe, today, one official pontificated that such designations would not be 'fair' since they would pander to private interests. The same could have been said for the freeway signs indicating a choice of either Detroit- or Chicago-bound from a particular exit, but practicality persevered and the signs went up and travellers began to discover Michigan and Ypsilanti and Depot Town.

Soon, however, signs had to be put up to indicate free public parking. Other signs pointed out that, in the absence of parking meters, streetside parking was limited to two hours. Even more visionary planners put up signs announcing access to public transportation. Signs began to appear indicating 'outsiders' could park in privately-owned spaces, as well. It was a revolutionary act.

The happiest sign of all appeared on the west wall of the Follett House, facing two nearby campuses and the prominent West Side. . .

"Welcome to Depot Town." As corny as a "Happy Birthday" banner, it really said . . .

"Welcome Home!" . . . and we were.

Baked On Automotive Finishes • Complete Collision Repair
CITY BODY EST. 1930
CARSTAR
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482-4737 • 482-9353 • Fax: 482-0181

Trade a paperback for one of Barb's for only 70c plus tax! Crazy!
Crazy Barb's
Paperback Book Exchange!
Mon-Sat 10am-6pm
50 East Cross 484-4564

Depot Doo
Fine Design in Hair Style
25 East Cross • 484-3045

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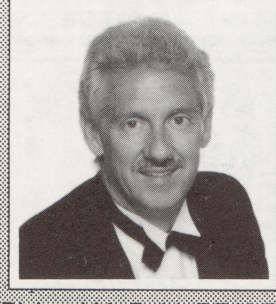
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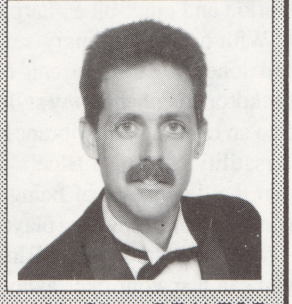
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